

Success Story

Knoxville Middle School, Knoxville Community School District
Jason Gramlich, KMS P.E. Teacher
2014-2015 School year



Summary

The Knoxville Community School District has established itself as a key contributor in promoting physical activity over the course of the 2014-2015 school year. A wellness committee was established in December to promote health-related fitness activities and exercise to students in elementary schools, middle school, and high school. Through a collaborative effort of teachers, students, parents, guidance counselors, the local recreation director, the school nurse, the city wellness supervisor, and community members they started working towards more physically active children in school.

The School Health Index was completed and identified areas of need that set in motion goals from the school health improvement plan. Some of the projects included a school garden at Northstar Elementary, Team Nutrition events, a school-wide breakfast, intramural activities, and brain breaks in classrooms. We are excited about what the future holds for our students!

Success Strategies

Response to intramural activities has been extremely positive. The numbers increased each morning that gym time was offered. Currently students are participating in basketball activities and will have the chance to play badminton and table tennis as well. Students enjoy the opportunity to be active and social with their friends at the same time. In addition to intramural activities, teachers were introduced to brain breaks at a school staff meeting. They were given information and sample activity breaks to incorporate into their classrooms. Several teachers responded with positive comments about the strategy. The opportunity to stimulate students and help them refocus on the academic material was the most rewarding aspect for the teachers.

KMS PANTHER PRIDE



Brain Break – 7th Grade Choir



Brain Break – 8th Grade Math

Challenges

The greatest challenge in getting brain breaks incorporated into the classroom was convincing teachers that they had enough time in their class period to devote to such activities. It was refreshing to hear details from teachers who had already infused brain breaks into their classes and highlighted the effectiveness of them to the rest of the staff. Mrs. Phillips, the vocal music teacher, said, “I had my students stand up and stretch during the middle of our rehearsal and couldn’t believe the difference it made. They seemed to regain a sense of energy that had been lost and were able to sing with greater energy and purpose.”

The biggest challenge organizing and starting the intramural program was making contact with all of the school personnel involved to make it possible for students to access the gym in the morning including the school principal, custodians, teaching staff, and associates.

Results

The willingness of teachers to try brain breaks has increased over time. Several teachers shared their desire to get the kids moving in their classes. Here are some of their comments:

- Roger Timm, 6th grade science: “I have been pretty good about not having the students sit too long. I like to get them up and moving quite often.”
- Jim Uitermarkt, 7th grade math: “The activity breaks seem to help some in my classes. My biggest issue is the class not wanting to stop doing the activity 😊.”
- Pam Gramlich, 6th-8th-grade special education: “It is a great release for my students to be able to get up and move during the class period when it is often hard for them to sit still for long periods of time.”

Chantell Downing, 8th grade math, recently used the gym to teach a lesson involving basketball. Students were to perform different shots as part of their math project. Manipulating numbers in the classroom could have easily done this but she decided to incorporate physical activity into her lesson. While it is still early in the process, the direction that the teachers are taking with this initiative is positive.

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Future Directions

The Knoxville Community School District made huge strides this year towards becoming more physically active in the schools. The wellness committee established this year is now branching out into subcommittees to better serve the needs of schools, students and the community. The district is also promoting the health of school employees and parents of students. The health and well-being of the town is important and in order to change the culture in Knoxville it will take everyone working together to accomplish it.

Knoxville Community School District will continue to make students the focal point and promote a healthy lifestyle, encourage physical activity throughout the school day, and teach students to value their bodies. A physically educated student will learn more efficiently in the academic classroom and perform at peak levels more often. Being part of the process has been rewarding for educators and motivates them to be even better educators.

Plans are underway to work with the student activity subcommittee to continue promoting physical activity and healthy choices and making experiences for students enjoyable and rewarding. The other physical education teachers in the district are also on this committee and are certain to come up with some awesome activities.



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